**Vitamin D Self Care Guidelines**

Following the review by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) on the evidence of vitamin D and health, Public Health England (PHE) have advised that to protect bone and muscle health, everyone needs vitamin D equivalent to an average daily intake of 400 units (10 µg)

**PHE advise that** **everyone should consider taking a daily supplement containing 400 units (10 µg) of vitamin D during the autumn and winter months (i.e. between October to March).**

**Those groups at high risk of vitamin D deficiency *(see Table 1)* should consider taking a daily supplement containing 400 units (10 µg) of vitamin D throughout the year.**

**General Lifestyle Advice**

Appropriate lifestyle advice which encourages, ‘enjoying the sun safely whilst taking care not to burn’ (**please note: exposure to sunlight through windows is insufficient because glass blocks UVB light**), adequate dietary intake and daily vitamin D supplementation where necessary, should be provided to all patients.

* [NHS Choices provides up to date advice on vitamin D and sunlight.](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Summerhealth/Pages/vitamin-D-sunlight.aspx)

**Groups at risk of Vitamin D deficiency**

The Department of Health recommends vitamin D supplementation in certain high risk adult groups in order to prevent Vitamin D deficiency, as per Table 1.

**Table 1: Department of Health Recommendations on Vitamin D supplementation in the UK (Adults)**

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**Groups at risk of vitamin D deficiency**

All pregnant and breastfeeding women \*

People aged 65 years and over (particularly those living in institutions or who are not regularly exposed to sunlight)

People who are not exposed to much sun (e.g. housebound individuals and those who cover their skin for cultural reasons)

People with pigmented skin (includes people of African, African-Caribbean and South Asian family origin)

**Recommendation:**

**Promote self-care - advise over the counter (OTC) supplements containing 400 units (10 mcg) per day**

*\*Pregnant /breastfeeding women may be eligible to obtain vitamins free of charge as part of the Healthy Start Scheme. Further information on the eligibility criteria can be found at* [*www.healthystart.nhs.uk.*](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/)

Pregnant or breastfeeding women who are not eligible for Healthy Start, can purchase Healthy Start vitamins from community pharmacies or be advised to buy an over the counter multivitamin preparation with similar vitamin and mineral composition to the Healthy Start vitamins, which are available at most pharmacies and larger supermarkets (see Table 2)

* Funding of vitamin D supplements to protect and maintain bone, teeth and muscle health and for long term maintenance is a personal responsibility.
* Vitamin D is readily available to purchase in pharmacies, health food shops and supermarkets at a far lower cost than on prescription.
* It is expected that patients will purchase such supplements.
* Community pharmacists or other healthcare professionals are able to advise on suitable vitamin D products.

**This does not affect GP prescribing of high-dose Vitamin D preparations that are not available over the counter**.

**Note:** The recommendations in this document should not replace clinical judgement as the decision to prescribe remains with the individual prescriber. There will be circumstances when it may be appropriate to prescribe these medicines. Under the NHS regulations GPs should prescribe any drugs that he or she feels are needed for a patient's medical care. A patient is entitled to drugs that the GP believes are necessary, not those which the patient feels should be prescribed 1.

1. British Medical Association. Prescribing in General Practice. June 2015. https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/gp-practices/service-provision/prescribing/prescribing-and-dispensing

**Table 2: Examples of adult vitamin D nutritional supplements suitable for pregnant women (Prices from June 2017\*)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Product** | **Strength** | **Approximate price** | **Source** | **Suitability** |
| Healthy Start Vitamins | 400 units (10mcg) | 56 tablets free of | Available from midwives, | Suitable for vegetarians but |
| for Pregnant women |  | charge where | health visitors and | not vegans |
| Vitamin D3 | (Also contains | eligible | children’s centres. For |  |
|  | vitamin C and folic |  | more info visit |  |
|  | acid |  | [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/) |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Pregnacare® | 400 units (10mcg) | 30 tablets Prices vary | Various supermarkets, | Suitable for vegetarians but |
| multivitamins and | (Also contains | \*from £4-£6 | chemists and online | not vegans |
| minerals Vitamin D3 | multiple other |  |  |  |
|  | constituents) |  |  |  |
| Sanatogen® Mum to | 400 units (10mcg) | 60 tablet Prices \*from £13 | Various supermarkets, | Suitable for vegetarians but |
| Be Multivitamins and | (Also contains |  | chemists and online | not vegans |
| minerals Vitamin D3 | multiple other |  |  |  |
|  | constituents) |  |  |  |

**Table 3: Examples of OTC (Over the Counter) Vitamin D preparations available for adults (Prices from June 2017\*)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Brand** |  | **Strength** |  | **Approximate price** |  |  | **Source** |  | **Suitability** |
|  |  |  | 1000 units |  |  |  |  | Available for purchase only from Boots |  | Suitable for |
|  |  |  | (25mcg) tablets |  |  |  |  |  | vegetarians |
|  | Boots Pharmaceuticals® |  |  |  |  |  | or |  |
|  |  |  |  | 90 tablets\* £4.99 |  |  | but |
|  | Vitamin D3 |  |  |  |  | www.boots.com |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | not vegans |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Holland and Barrett® Fast |  | 1000 units (25mcg)/ |  |  |  |  | Available for purchase only from |  | Suitable for |
|  |  | 10 drops |  |  |  |  |  | vegetarians |
|  | Acting Liquid |  |  | 59mls \*£13.99 |  | Holland and Barrett or |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | but |
|  | Vitamin D3 |  |  |  |  |  |  | www.hollandandbarrett.com |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | not vegans |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Suitable for |
|  | BioLife® Vitamin D3 |  | 1000 units (25mcg) tablets |  | 90 chewable tablets |  | Available for purchase only from |  | vegetarians |
|  | chewable tablets |  |  |  |  |  | but |
|  |  |  | \*£9.98 |  |  | www.lifestylenaturalhealth.co.uk |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | not vegans |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Suitable for |
|  | Nature’s Remedy® Vitamin |  | 1000 units |  | 200 tablets/ capsules |  | Available for purchase only from |  | vegetarians |
|  | D3 |  | (25mcg) tablets and capsules | \*£8.99 |  |  | www.naturesremedy.co.uk |  | but |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | not vegans |
|  |  | 500 |  |  |  |  |  |  | Suitable for |
|  | Superdrug® Vitamin D3 |  | units |  | 90 tablets \*£2.15 |  | Available for purchase only from |  | vegetarians |
|  |  | (12.5mcg) tablets |  |  | Superdrug or www.superdrug.com |  | but |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | not vegans |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Suitable for |
|  | Valupak® Vitamin D3 |  | 1000 units |  | 60 tablets\* £0.99 |  | Available from pharmacies |  | vegetarians |
|  |  | (25mcg) tablets |  |  |  | but |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | not vegans |